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## [I am Navy Medicine: Naval Shore Activities Sailor of the Year Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Jessica Wentlent](#)

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*Editors Note: As Naval Shore Activities Sailor of the Year Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Wentlent is competing in the 2015 Navy Shore Sailor of the Year competition on March 30, 2016. The winner of that competition will be meritoriously promoted to chief petty officer.*



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Wenlent speaks to an audience after being named Navy Medicine 2015 Sailor of the Year, with Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, surgeon general of the Navy by her side at Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia. Official U.S. Navy photo by James Rosenfelder

Joining the Navy was by far the best decision I made as an 18-year-old recent high school graduate. I still remember the disbelief in my parents face when I came home and told them I had joined the Navy. My parents raised three strong, caring and ambitious children. They knew once I had made a decision that I would give it everything I had.

I learned everything about teamwork and trust during my first rotation as an emergency room hospital corpsman at Naval Medical Center San Diego. I fell in love with patient care and providing comfort during difficult times. My chief worked a few hours on shift so she could get to know us, and I promised I would never forget that. When it came time to rotate, it only made sense to combine my love for patients and exercise. I attended physical therapy “C” school and went on to National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland.

Soon after, I deployed to Djibouti, Africa, as an independent physical therapy technician during Operation Enduring Freedom. Coincidentally, my office was the emergency room, so I was utilized during any mass casualties. Being in Africa, I really didn’t expect any casualties, but I was wrong. I remember my IDC rushing in and telling me there were four personnel coming in after a helicopter crash. A team was ready at each bed, patiently waiting for their arrival, and as the doors opened, our hearts sank as we realized there was no chance for survival. I stayed and did my job as a corpsman, because that’s what these service members deserved. We stood the watch until they were transported home.

There are a few moments in life that really change how you look at the world, and this was one of them for me. Ever since that moment, I’ve always stopped and asked myself, “what am I doing to serve others?” It always comes back to the Sailors. During my tour at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, my team implemented the first ever Joint Fitness Enhancement Program for a command of 3,006

Sailors and Soldiers. Each person and branch of service brought a dynamic to the table that allowed us to get 30 percent of our personnel back to Navy and Army standards.

Currently, I am stationed at Naval Medical Center San Diego as the leading petty officer of the physical and occupational therapy, chiropractic, and sports medicine department. Our team delivers rehabilitation services at 12 clinics to 46,000 military and family members per month. Being able to watch a patient walk for the first time with their prosthetic or run two miles without pain is what makes this field so rewarding to be in. I am privileged to work alongside 126 active duty and civilian health care providers that positively impact the physical and psychological readiness of our troops.

Now, when I talk to my parents I can hear the excitement and pride in their voice as they listen to my career. Being selected as Naval Shore Activities Sailor of the Year is a true testament to how they've raised me, how my leaders challenge me, and more importantly the duty. I have to continue to carry on the same values to my Sailors and my son.

I am Hospital Corpsman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jessica Wentlent. I am Navy Medicine.

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